Chary - plus, What's the difference between 'hillbilly' and 'redneck'?

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WORD OF THE DAY

April 10, 2025

chary

adjective | CHAIR-ee

What It Means

Chary is usually used with *about* or *of* to describe someone who is cautious about doing something.

// The director is *chary* about spending money.

// I've always been *chary* of travelling alone.

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Examples of CHARY

"Overall, Rendell is *chary* about divulging the selling price of various documents, but he does occasionally reveal some financial details." — Michael Dirda, *The Washington Post*, 3 Feb. 2024

Did You Know?

How did *chary*, which began as the opposite of *cheery*, become a synonym of *wary*? Don't worry, there's no need to be chary—the answer is not dreary. *Chary*'s Middle English predecessor, *charri*, meant "sorrowful," a sense that harks back to the Old English word *cearig*, meaning "troubled, troublesome, taking care," which ultimately comes from an assumed-but-unattested Germanic word, *karō*, meaning "sorrow" or "worry," that is also an ancestor of the word *care*. It's perhaps unsurprising then, that *chary* was once used to mean "dear" or "cherished." Both sorrow and affection have largely faded from *chary*, and today the word is most often used as a synonym of *careful*.

Name That Synonym

Fill in the blanks to complete a synonym of *chary* meaning "watchful of danger or risk": c _ _ c _ _ s _ e _ t.

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